

property in question and who are empowered to represent the agency on matters related to the property.

(3) In the case of portions of Wild and Scenic Rivers to which Section 4(f) applies, the official(s) with jurisdiction are the official(s) of the Federal agency or agencies that own or administer the affected portion of the river corridor in question. For State administered, federally designated rivers (section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1273(a)(ii)), the officials with jurisdiction include both the State agency designated by the respective Governor and the Secretary of the Interior.

ROD. Refers to a Record of Decision prepared pursuant to 40 CFR 1505.2 and § 771.127 of this chapter.

Section 4(f) evaluation. Refers to the documentation prepared to support the granting of a Section 4(f) approval under § 774.3(a), unless preceded by the word “programmatically.” A “programmatically Section 4(f) evaluation” is the documentation prepared pursuant to § 774.3(d) that authorizes subsequent project-level Section 4(f) approvals as described therein.

Section 4(f) Property. Section 4(f) property means publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State, or local significance, or land of an historic site of national, State, or local significance.

Use. Except as set forth in §§ 774.11 and 774.13, a “use” of Section 4(f) property occurs:

- (1) When land is permanently incorporated into a transportation facility;
- (2) When there is a temporary occupancy of land that is adverse in terms of the statute’s preservation purpose as determined by the criteria in § 774.13(d); or
- (3) When there is a constructive use of a Section 4(f) property as determined by the criteria in § 774.15.

PART 777—MITIGATION OF IMPACTS TO WETLANDS AND NATURAL HABITAT

Sec.

777.1 Purpose.

777.2 Definitions.

777.3 Background.

777.5 Federal participation.

777.7 Evaluation of impacts.

777.9 Mitigation of impacts.

777.11 Other considerations.

AUTHORITY: 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*; 49 U.S.C. 303; 23 U.S.C. 101(a), 103, 109(h), 133(b)(1), (b)(11), and (d)(2), 138, 315; E.O. 11990; DOT Order 5660.1A; 49 CFR 1.48(b).

SOURCE: 65 FR 82924, Dec. 29, 2000, unless otherwise noted.

§ 777.1 Purpose.

To provide policy and procedures for the evaluation and mitigation of adverse environmental impacts to wetlands and natural habitat resulting from Federal-aid projects funded pursuant to provisions of title 23, U.S. Code. These policies and procedures shall be applied by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to projects under the Federal Lands Highway Program to the extent such application is deemed appropriate by the FHWA.

§ 777.2 Definitions.

In addition to those contained in 23 U.S.C. 101(a), the following definitions shall apply as used in this part:

Biogeochemical transformations means those changes in chemical compounds and substances which naturally occur in ecosystems. Examples are the carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus cycles in nature, in which these elements are incorporated from inorganic substances into organic matter and recycled on a continuing basis.

Compensatory mitigation means restoration, enhancement, creation, and under exceptional circumstances, preservation, of wetlands, wetland buffer areas, and other natural habitats, carried out to replace or compensate for the loss of wetlands or natural habitat area or functional capacity resulting from Federal-aid projects funded pursuant to provisions of title 23, U.S. Code. Compensatory mitigation usually occurs in advance of or concurrent with the impacts to be mitigated, but may occur after such impacts in special circumstances.

Mitigation bank means a site where wetlands and/or other aquatic resources or natural habitats are restored, created, enhanced, or in exceptional circumstances, preserved, expressly for the purpose of providing

compensatory mitigation in advance of authorized impacts to similar resources. For purposes of the Clean Water Act, Section 404 (33 U.S.C. 1344), use of a mitigation bank can only be authorized when impacts are unavoidable.

Natural habitat means a complex of natural, primarily native or indigenous vegetation, not currently subject to cultivation or artificial landscaping, a primary purpose of which is to provide habitat for wildlife, either terrestrial or aquatic. For purposes of this part, habitat has the same meaning as natural habitat. This definition excludes rights-of-way that are acquired with Federal transportation funds specifically for highway purposes.

Net gain of wetlands means a wetland resource conservation and management principle under which, over the long term, unavoidable losses of wetlands area or functional capacity due to highway projects are offset by gains at a ratio greater than 1:1, through restoration, enhancement, preservation, or creation of wetlands or associated areas critical to the protection or conservation of wetland functions. This definition specifically excludes natural habitat, as defined in this section, other than wetlands.

On-site, in-kind mitigation means compensatory mitigation which replaces wetlands or natural habitat area or functions lost as a result of a highway project with the same or like wetland or habitat type and functions adjacent or contiguous to the site of the impact.

Practicable means available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics, in light of overall project purposes.

Service area of a mitigation bank means that the service area of a wetland or natural habitat mitigation bank shall be consistent with that in the Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use and Operation of Mitigation Banks (60 FR 58605, November 28, 1995), *i.e.*, the designated area (e.g., watershed, county) wherein a bank can be expected to provide appropriate compensation for impacts to wetlands and/or other aquatic or natural habitat resources.

Wetland or habitat enhancement means activities conducted in existing wetlands or other natural habitat to achieve specific management objectives or provide conditions which previously did not exist, and which increase one or more ecosystem functions. Enhancement may involve trade-offs between the resource structure, function, and values; a positive change in one may result in negative effects to other functions. Examples of activities which may be carried out to enhance wetlands or natural habitats include, but are not limited to, alteration of hydrologic regime, vegetation management, erosion control, fencing, integrated pest management and control, and fertilization.

Wetland or habitat establishment period means a period of time agreed to by the FHWA, State DOT, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as necessary to establish wetland or natural habitat functional capacity in a compensatory mitigation project sufficient to compensate wetlands or habitat losses due to impacts of Federal-aid highway projects. The establishment period may vary depending on the specific wetland or habitat type being developed.

Wetland or habitat functional capacity means the ability of a wetland or natural habitat to perform natural functions, such as provide wildlife habitat, support biodiversity, store surface water, or perform biogeochemical transformations, as determined by scientific functional assessment. Natural functions of wetlands include, but are not limited to, those listed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at 33 CFR 320.4(b)(2)(i) through (viii).

Wetland or habitat preservation means the protection of ecologically important wetlands, other aquatic resources, or other natural habitats in perpetuity through the implementation of appropriate legal and physical mechanisms. Preservation of wetlands for compensatory mitigation purposes may include protection of upland areas adjacent to wetlands as necessary to ensure protection and/or enhancement of the aquatic ecosystem.

§ 777.3

Wetland or habitat restoration means the reestablishment of wetlands or natural habitats on a site where they formerly existed or exist in a substantially degraded state.

Wetland or wetlands means those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.

Wetlands or habitat mitigation credit means a unit of wetlands or habitat mitigation, defined either by area or a measure of functional capacity through application of scientific functional assessment. With respect to mitigation banks, this definition means the same as that in the Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Mitigation Banks.

§ 777.3 Background.

(a) Executive Order 11990 (42 FR 26961, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 121) Protection of Wetlands, and DOT Order 5660.1A,¹ Preservation of the Nation's Wetlands, emphasize the important functions and values inherent in the Nation's wetlands. Federal agencies are directed to avoid new construction in wetlands unless the head of the agency determines that:

(1) There is no practicable alternative to such construction, and

(2) The proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use.

(b) Sections 103 and 133 of title 23, U.S. Code, identify additional approaches for mitigation and management of impacts to wetlands and natural habitats which result from projects funded pursuant to title 23, U.S. Code, as eligible for participation with title 23, U.S. Code, funds.

(c) 33 CFR parts 320 through 330, Regulatory Program, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Section 404, Clean Water

¹DOT Order 5660.1A is available for inspection and copying from FHWA headquarters and field offices as prescribed at 49 CFR part 7.

23 CFR Ch. I (4–1–08 Edition)

Act and 40 CFR part 230, Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines for the Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Material, establish requirements for the permitting of discharge of dredge or fill material in wetlands and other waters of the United States.

(d) Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Mitigation Banks presents guidance for the use of ecological mitigation banks as compensatory mitigation in the Section 404 Regulatory Program for unavoidable impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources.

(e) Interagency Cooperation—Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (50 CFR part 402), presents regulations establishing interagency consultation procedures relative to impacts to species listed under the authority of the Act and their habitats as required by Section 7, Interagency Coordination, of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1536).

§ 777.5 Federal participation.

(a) Those measures which the FHWA and a State DOT find appropriate and necessary to mitigate adverse environmental impacts to wetlands and natural habitats are eligible for Federal participation where the impacts are the result of projects funded pursuant to title 23, U.S. Code. The justification for the cost of proposed mitigation measures should be considered in the same context as any other public expenditure; that is, the proposed mitigation represents a reasonable public expenditure when weighed against other social, economic, and environmental values, and the benefit realized is commensurate with the proposed expenditure. Mitigation measures shall give like consideration to traffic needs, safety, durability, and economy of maintenance of the highway.

(b) It is FHWA policy to permit, consistent with the limits set forth in this part, the expenditure of title 23, U.S. Code, funds for activities required for the planning, design, construction, monitoring, and establishment of wetlands and natural habitat mitigation projects, and acquisition of land or interests therein.